

Message #59

I Corinthians 13:4-7

An agape level of love does not just talk about love; it sacrificially demonstrates it.

When some face Jesus Christ, they will probably try to come up with some verbal excuse as to why they didn't love their brothers and sisters in this church at the agape level. But all mouths will be shut when Jesus Christ holds up His nail-scarred hands.

BELIEVERS IN GOD'S CHURCH ARE TO CONTINUALLY DEMONSTRATE GOD'S SUPERIOR LEVEL OF AGAPE LOVE BY ACTIVELY DEMONSTRATING THE QUALITIES OF GOD'S AGAPE LOVE.

This is the level of love in which God loves us. This is the level of love that motivated Christ to die for us. This is the level of love that we are to have for each other in this church; in fact, without it we are nothing.

In these four verses, there are 15 qualities that describe the agape love that we are to have in our lives: seven are positive and 8 are negative. So far in our study, we have looked at two positive qualities—what love is, and eight negative qualities—what love is not.

POSITIVE QUALITY #1 – Agape love IS patient. 13:4a

Agape love is continually very patient with all types of people and in all types of situations.

POSITIVE QUALITY #2 – Agape love IS kind. 13:4b

Agape love is continually very gracious and sweet to all.

NEGATIVE QUALITY #3 – Agape love IS NOT jealous. 13:4c

Agape love is not continually jealous of what others have and it is not continually envious, desiring to rob them of what they have.

NEGATIVE QUALITY #4 – Agape love DOES NOT brag. 13:4c

Agape love does not continually boast.

NEGATIVE QUALITY #5 – Agape love IS NOT arrogant. 13:4e

Agape love is not continually inflated.

NEGATIVE QUALITY #6 – Agape love DOES NOT act unbecomingly. 13:5a

Agape love is not continually disrespectful or dishonorable.

NEGATIVE QUALITY #7 – Agape love DOES NOT seek its own. **13:5b**

Agape love is not continually focused on self.

NEGATIVE QUALITY #8 – Agape love IS NOT provoked. **13:5c**

Agape love does not continually fly into a rage.

NEGATIVE QUALITY #9 – Agape love DOES NOT take into account a wrong suffered.
13:5d

Agape love does not continually calculate or remember the bad. It does not hold grudges.

NEGATIVE QUALITY #10 – Agape love DOES NOT rejoice in iniquity. **13:6a**

Agape love is not continually joyous over things unrighteous or unjust.

POSITIVE QUALITY #11 – Agape love DOES rejoice with the truth. **13:6b**

Agape love continually finds its greatest happiness and joy in THE truth. The word “truth” is articular, meaning Paul has a specific truth in mind. What I understand him to mean is that agape love continually finds its greatest joy and happiness in the truth of God and in the setting forth of that truth, both to others for their own development, and for one’s own self.

Agape love does not find joy and happiness in what is false, but in what is true. William Barclay brings out a good point when he says that there are times when it would be much easier not to share the truth, but sharing the truth is the agape love thing to do. Ultimately, it is the truth that will bring greatest joy (William Barclay, *The Letters to the Corinthians*, p. 123).

Any church or individual who will be deemed superior by God, who truly loves at God’s agape love level, will be one interested in truth. This one will learn the truth, share the truth and rejoice with those who apply the truth.

People who love at God’s level of agape love are not as much interested in their opinions as they are in the truth of God’s Word.

Agape love WILL NOT veil the truth; it WILL expound it. If we truly love one another at the agape level, we will find our greatest joy in pointing others in the way of the truth of God and we will find our greatest joy in applying the truth of God to our own lives.

Perhaps THE greatest illustration of this in the Bible is the statement found in Hebrews 12:2, which says, “who for the joy set before Him endured the cross.”

The answer is by knowing the truth that ultimately through His death, people's sins would be forgiven and they would be given a relationship with God forever. Jesus Christ found joy in knowing the truth that in His death on the cross, many would be made right with God.

Now in the final four qualities found in **verse 7**, you will notice that the word "all" shows up four times. This word DOES NOT have an article, which means that it is referring to the character and quality of all types of things. When the word "all" is used with the first and fourth verbs, "bears" and "endures," it carries with it the idea of bearing and enduring the character and quality of all types of things classified as negative. When the word "all" is used with the second and third verbs, "believes" and "hopes," it carries with it the idea of believing and hoping in the character and quality of all types of things that could be classified as positive.

POSITIVE QUALITY #12 – Agape love bears all things. **13:7a**

Agape love is that which continually seeks to cover or keep secret the faults and failures of another. The word "bear" literally means to protect by covering or concealing. Agape love continually endures all types of negative things about a brother or sister and does its best to cover them, not bringing them to light. Agape love "bears," but it does not "bare."

Satan absolutely hates God's people. He wants to devour them and he uses accusations to try to accomplish this objective (Rev. 12:10).

POSITIVE QUALITY #13 – Agape love believes all things. **13:7b**

Agape love continually trusts or places confidence in the character and quality of all types of positive things. What this means is that in the context of the church, agape love will continually strive to believe the best about people. It will continually strive to trust them. In all types of circumstances and in all types of situations, agape love will continually lean toward trust rather than suspicion. This does not mean that agape love is gullible and will believe anything.

POSITIVE QUALITY #14 – Agape love hopes all things. **13:7c**

Agape love continually maintains a hope and expectation concerning people and concerning the future. It continually looks for all kinds of positive things to happen. Even at times when the evidence seems to be adverse, agape love will continually hope for the best.

Agape love will do its best to continually maintain an optimistic outlook for the church and in the church. It continually expects all types of good things to happen to those connected with its fellowship.

Agape love must love God and love others enough to keep hope alive. It is this hope that believes that just down the road that person will change. It is this hope that keeps you investing hours to prepare for your Sunday school lesson and keeps you faithful even when you don't feel like it. Agape love hopes for the best and hopes when things aren't the best.

POSITIVE QUALITY #15 – Agape love endures all things. **13:7d**

Agape love continually holds up during difficulties. It does not continually give up or quit or retaliate in a vindictive manner. Agape love continues to courageously endure and bear up under weighty adverse circumstances. It rejoices in the good of others and endures the bad. The place where agape love is to be worked out is in the context of the local church.

Do you know why we should love each other at this level? Look at His hands, look at His scars. That is how Jesus Christ loved us.